\$15 \$15

1. An cutting apparatus for removing a portion of a protective tape from a wafer, comprising:

a support for holding a wafer having a protective tape thereon;

a cutting element placed at a first predetermined distance from said support for moving relative to said support to cut protective tape from a wafer placed on the support;

a sensor for detecting if protective tape on a wafer is properly removed by said cutting element; and

a circuit for initiating corrective action when the sensor detects that a protective tape is not properly removed from a wafer by said cutting element.

15 2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the circuit for initiating corrective action stops operation of said cutting apparatus.

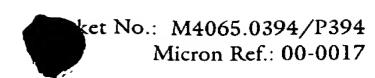
- 3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the circuit for initiating corrective action prevents a wafer on said support from being moved to a grinding area.
- 4. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the circuit for initiating corrective action prevents a backgrinding apparatus from grinding the wafer.
  - 5. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the sensor is an mechanical sensor.
  - 6. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the sensor is an optical sensor.
  - 7. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said first predetermined distance is approximately 0.5 mm from the edge of a wafer placed on said support.
- 8. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the sensor is placed behind the cutting element in a direction of cutting action of said cutting element.

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9. A method for removing a portion of a protective tape from a semiconductor wafer comprising:

cutting the protective tape at a predetermined distance from the perimeter of the wafer;

- sensing whether said cutting has properly removed the protective tape; and taking a corrective action if said protective tape has not been properly removed.
  - 10. The method of claim 9, wherein the step of sensing further comprises sensing whether said protective tape exists at said predetermined distance from the perimeter of the wafer.
  - 11. The method of claim 9, wherein the corrective action is halting further cutting operation.
- 15 12. The method of claim 9, wherein the corrective action is preventing the wafer from being subsequently backgrinded.
  - 13. The method of claim 9, wherein the step of sensing is a mechanical sensing.



- 14. The method of claim 9, wherein the step of sensing is an optical sensing.
- 15. The method of claim 9, wherein said predetermined short distance is approximately
- 5 0.5 mm.